

## AGGIES IN WWI

## HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 22, 2015*

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in the trenches of the Argonne Forrest in north-eastern France, sat thousands of allied troops. It was the fall of 1918, it was World War I. The battle was muddy, rainy and most of all it was bloody. It was one of the largest and deadliest battles in U.S. military history, involving over a million American soldiers. Among the masses, in the front line trenches, sat James Vernon "Pinky" Wilson, a marine from Texas, who amidst chaos felt called to write what would become one of the most famous songs in college history, the Aggie War Hymn.

Pinky Wilson grew up in the small Texas town of Florence, about 30 miles north of Austin. In 1917, he was a junior enrolled at Texas A&M University when he volunteered to serve our country in World War I.

Wilson fought with the 6th Marine Regiment and by choice he became buck private in the Marine Corps, turning down two commissions, remaining a buck private throughout his military career. Not long after joining his Marine outfit as a replacement, Wilson saw firsthand the rigorous and relentless fighting in the Champagne area of France.

In November of 1918, Wilson found himself right in the middle of the Battle of the Argonne Forrest. By the time Wilson took his first muddy spot in the trenches, the battle had been waging on for 37 days. For the remaining days, the Germans gave everything they had, fighting to the death. Knowing that the end was near, the Germans were desperate to try and steer the war in their favor.

They bombarded and pelted the Marines with infantry, artillery, and machine gun fire. While sitting in the foxhole watching this bloodbath unfold before him, Wilson was struck with an idea. In an interview with the San Antonio Express-News in 1975, Wilson recalled that it was during the Champagne battle he had a running idea of writing a song. A fight song that a quartet would sing for Texas A&M. He took out a pencil and some letters from home and began scribbling the lines of the song that would become one of the most recognizable songs in Texas history.

Wilson sat with his lyrics in the trenches until the war was over. Since he wrote the song and knew it perfectly in his head, melody, lyrics and all, he never bothered to keep the original copy he wrote. The tenor of the War Hymn as it was officially named, takes digs at the arch rival of Texas A&M, the University of Texas Longhorns.

By the time the Battle of the Argonne Forrest was over, it had been a 47 day nightmare that the allies were able to wake up from. And they woke up victorious, the war was over. The bloody battle that began on September 26, 1918, concluded World War I. It lasted until the Armistice, on November 11, 1918.

What is remarkable about the class of 1917 at Texas A&M University is that they all volunteered to serve our country. Some as officers and some as enlisted men. These men went on to fight in World War I to serve and protect America and her freedoms. They were the fathers of the Greatest Generation.

They came back and had families, instilling the same sense of selfless service in their

sons and younger generation. When World War II started, the entire graduating classes of 1941 and 1942 at Texas A&M University did the exact same thing; they all volunteered to serve our country.

The Aggies at A&M have a long tradition of service to the military. A&M commissions so many officers into our military that the number rivals our service academies.

Much like the writing of our Star Spangled Banner, the Aggie War Hymn was born from a place of true patriotism during a time of pure terror and a fight for freedom. While the original version that Wilson wrote had a first verse, the second verse makes up the war hymn. And still, almost 100 years later, this second verse marks one of the most notable and famous A&M traditions. After the war, Wilson eventually returned to A&M to earn a degree and graduate with the class of 1920. He went on to become a successful Texas Rancher.

His alma mater will be forever grateful for his contribution to not only his school, but to the State of Texas and his country.

To quote the Aggie War Hymn, "Rough tough, real stuff, Texas A&M,"—those Aggies who fought in WWI, WWII and those who have served and are currently serving our country embody this line to the fullest extent.

James Vernon "Pinky" Wilson is one of the remarkable men who answered the call of his country. There truly are none quite like the Texas A&M Aggies.

The Aggie spirit is engrained and rooted deep into Texas A&M. They are hard core patriots, committed cadets and forever rivals of the University of Texas. They are and will always be the pulse of Texas A&M. Gig 'em.

And that's just the way it is.

## THE AGGIE WAR HYMN

(By Pinky Wilson)

Hullabaloo, Caneck! Caneck!  
Hullabaloo, Caneck! Caneck!

## FIRST VERSE

All hail to dear old Texas A&M  
Rally around Maroon and White  
Good luck to dear old Texas Aggies  
They are the boys who show the real old fight

That good old Aggie spirit thrills us  
And makes us yell and yell and yell  
So let's fight for dear old Texas A&M  
We're going to beat you all to  
Chig-gar-roo-gar-rem  
Chig-gar-roo-gar-rem

Rough Tough! Real Stuff! Texas A&M!

## SECOND VERSE

Good-bye to Texas university  
So long to the orange and the white  
Good luck to dear old Texas Aggies  
They are the boys that show the real old fight

"The eyes of Texas are upon you . . ."

That is the song they sing so well  
So good-bye to Texas university  
We're going to beat you all to  
Chig-gar-roo-gar-rem  
Chig-gar-roo-gar-rem  
Rough Tough! Real Stuff! Texas A&M!

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT  
OF BERNARD "BERNY" BALKONIS

## HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 22, 2015*

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of the retirement of Bernard "Berny" Frank

Balkonis, Jr. Mr. Balkonis was Vice President of Sales for Prairie Estates Genetics of Middleton, Wisconsin. Mr. Balkonis' retirement at the end of 2014 marked the conclusion of a 40 year career in the seed corn industry. The President of Prairie Estates Genetics, Ron Rogers, affirmed that Balkonis leaves a robust legacy as a fantastic mentor to forage managers and a valued member of the Prairie Estates Genetics team.

Mr. Balkonis graduated from University of Wisconsin-River Falls in 1975, working on dairy farms in the summer and during holiday breaks to make his way through school. After graduation and marriage to his high school sweetheart, Mr. Balkonis was recruited by Farm Supply (Growmark), and managed a store location in northern Illinois for five years. After his time with Farm Supply, he then joined PAG Seeds, a division of Cargill. During his time with PAG Seeds, Mr. Balkonis worked as a territory manager in southwest Michigan. After PAG Seeds, Paymaster, and Cargill combined to create Cargill Hybrid Seeds, Balkonis was moved to northern Michigan, where he became both territory manager and assistant district manager. While located throughout Michigan, Mr. Balkonis and his wife welcomed three sons into the world.

In 1992, Mr. Balkonis was promoted within Cargill Hybrid Seeds to area manager for the eastern United States. Then, in 1996, Mr. Balkonis assumed the position of area manager for the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois and moved his family to Holmen, Wisconsin. In 2000, when Cargill Hybrid Seeds sold to Dow (becoming the entity Mycogen), Mr. Balkonis remained on as area manager. After his time as area manager with Mycogen, Mr. Balkonis took on the responsibilities of VP of Sales for Prairie Estates Genetics, where he would spend the rest of his career and begin the transition to the new role of grandparent with the birth of his first grandson Efram.

Mr. Balkonis will retire with his wife of 40 years, Claudia, in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, just 10 miles north of Holmen where they raised their three sons, Adam, Scott and Wade. I wish to extend the best of wishes to Berny as he steps into retirement and that next great adventure.

IN HONOR OF MAJOR CHAD ERIN  
LAMPHERE

## HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 22, 2015*

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Major Chad Erin Lamphere, an American hero who valiantly served his country while serving in the United States Army.

Chad was born on August 24, 1973 on a small family farm in Arkansaw, WI. Displaying a warm heart at a young age, Chad helped his family raise dogs, cats, pigs, and goats, while also contributing and giving back to his community through partaking in 4-H. Chad quickly rose to the top of his academic classes, graduating with two degrees and as Valedictorian from Hartnell College, and later attending UCLA for pre-medical courses, in which he graduated Summa Cum Laude.